Mr. *Smalwood's*

SERMON,

Preach'd at the

CHESHIRE-FEAST

Decemb. 8. 1698.

Jovis 15 *die Decemb.* 1698.

IT is agreed at a *General Meeting* of the *Stewards* of this *Cheſhire-Feaſt*, That their moſt Hearty Thanks be given to Mr. *Smalwood* for his *Sermon* Preach'd at *St. Peters, Cornhil, Dec.* 8. 1698. and that he be deſired to Print the ſame.

Charles Lowndes, } Treaſurers.
Charles Jackſon, }

n/a

Christopher Marshall

A SERMON

Preach'd before

The Honourable Society

OF THE

NATIVES

Of the most

Ancient County Palatine

AND

CITY of CHESTER,

Decemb. 8. 1698.

BY

JAMES SMALWOOD, *Chaplain to the Right Honourable the Earl of* Romney, *and His Majesty's own Regiment of Foot-Guards.*

LONDON: Printed for *Samuel Lowndes* over-against *Exeter-Exchange* in the *Strand.* 1699.

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TO

My very Worthy and much Esteemed

Friends and Countrey-men,

Mr. *Charles Lowndes*, } Treasurers.
Mr. *Charles Jackson*, }

Capt. *John Croxton*,
Mr. { *Thomas Gamul*, / *Robert Binett*, / *James Lowe*, / *Simon Lea*, }
Mr. { *Dod Brereton*, / *John Key*, / *John Rigby*, / *John Fearnly*, / *John Withers*, }

Stewards of the CHESHIRE-FEAST.

GENTLEMEN,

THough it was with a great deal of Willingness that I undertook to Preach this Sermon, yet it is with some Reluctancy that I Print it; Being always ready to serve my Friends, but never Fond of Publishing my Mean Labours

Labours to the World; However, You, *who ſo eaſily prevailed with me to do the* Former, *when you importuned, could not be denied the* Latter; *The* Sermon *therefore at* your *Requeſt, ſuch as it is, is made Publick; and whatever it is, it is wholly* yours; *For* you *it was* Preach'd, *and for* you *it is* Printed; *And if it has the good Fortune to contribute any thing to the Publick-ſpirited Deſign you deſired it ſhould be* Printed *for, which was to Encourage and promote ſuch* Charitable Societies *as your* Own *is, (which you were ſo kind to tell me you thought it would) I ſhall then partake of the Satisfaction* You *propoſe to your ſelves in it; And ſhall be always ambitious of doing any thing whereby I may approve my ſelf,*

GENTLEMEN,

Your moſt Affectionate Friend,

AND

Moſt Humble Servant,

JAMES SMALWOOD.

A SERMON

Preach'd at the

Cheſhire-Feaſt, *Dec.* 8. 1698.

Deuter. C. 16. *v.* 16. *Three times in a year ſhall all thy Males appear before the Lord thy God, in the Place which He ſhall chooſe; in the Feaſt of Unleavened Bread, and in the Feaſt of Weeks, and in the Feaſt of Tabernacles.* V. 17. *And they ſhall not appear before the Lord empty, every Man ſhall give as he is able, according to the Bleſſing of the Lord thy God, which He hath given thee.*

THE Deſign of theſe Anniverſary Meetings is to promote *Charity*, and to improve and cultivate a *Mutual Love and Friendſhip* amongſt ſeveral diſtinct Societies of Men; A Deſign ſo noble and generous in it ſelf, ſo beneficial to others, ſo becoming Men, and ſo truly Chriſtian, that as it hath hitherto long obtain'd and met with encouragement in this great *City*, ſo ought it ſtill to be carried on, and cheriſh'd, and ſupported both by the Approbation and Contributions too of all Pious and Well meaning Perſons.

But although theſe Annual Meetings are ſo well intended, and of ſo real uſe and benefit to Mankind; yet

(as

(as the beſt and wiſeſt Actions cannot eſcape all Tongues) there are ſome Men in the World, who cenſure, and decry, and condemn them, as tending rather to Riotouſneſs and Luxury, than to any true purpoſe of Religion and Piety.

To aſſert therefore the Cuſtom of theſe Publick Feaſts, and to vindicate them from the undeſerved Reflections and Objections ſome ſcrupulous Men may raiſe againſt them, I chiefly choſe theſe Words for my Text; whereby we may ſee that ſuch-like Aſſemblings as *theſe* were not only always in uſe amongſt Men, as they were guided by Natural Inclinations, and the Light of Reaſon, but they were likewiſe appointed and enjoined by the Law of God himſelf.

The Words are theſe, *Three times in a year ſhall all thy Males*, &c.

From theſe Words *Two* things are eaſily to be obſerv'd.

Firſt, That *Publick Annual Feaſts* were cuſtomary among the *Jews*.

Secondly, That though theſe *Feaſts* were inſtituted each of them for different Reaſons, and upon different Occaſions, yet the deſign and ſcope of them all was the ſame; For it is ſaid in common to them All, without any reſtriction or limitation to This or That particular Feaſt, *That no Man ſhall appear before the Lord empty, but every Man ſhall give as he is able.*

In the handling of the former part of the Text, namely, the uſualneſs of *Publick Feaſts* among the *Jews*, I ſhall do theſe *Two* things.

Firſt, I ſhall ſhew the Method and Order wherein *They* managed their *Publick Feaſts*.

Secondly, I will endeavour to Vindicate theſe *Publick Feaſts* from the hard Cenſures ſome Men may paſs upon them.

And

And then from the latter part of the *Text* I will,

Firſt ſhew, That *Charity*, and the preſervation of *Mutual Love and Amity*, was the chief and primary deſign of all Feſtival Aſſemblies.

Secondly, I will endeavour to ſet forth the Worth and Excellency of thoſe Two great Vertues, and recommend them to our Chriſtian Practice.

Thirdly, I will cloſe all with ſome particular Application to *you* the Members of this *Honourable Society, the Natives of the County Palatine of Cheſter.*

To begin in order,

Firſt, I will ſhew the Method how the *Jews* managed their *Publick Feaſts*; But here it is not my intent to amuſe you with a recital of all the Formalities and Ceremonies of that People in the Solemnization of their *Feaſts*; For as their Religion was moſtly External, ſo it conſiſted in Pomp and Shew, and in a great many Fanciful, which their *Rabbies* would perſuade us were all Myſtical, Performances; What I ſhall take notice of to you, and what indeed chiefly deſerves our Imitation, is, that they conſtantly began their Feſtival days with Gods Service; *Summo mane, &c.* ſays a certain Author, that is, *In the morning they offered their joint Sacrifice unto God, and then afterwards they went to Dinner*; Which Cuſtom although it is not expreſſly mentioned in this place where my *Text* is, yet in ſeveral other places of the *Old Teſtament* we read, it was the Cuſtom always before their *Feaſts* to offer up to God publick *Sacrifices*, that ſo they might Conſecrate their Solemn Rejoycings with a Solemn Devotion; That ſo they might perform firſt their Obligations to their God, before they would offer either to ſerve themſelves, or their Neighbours; And thus we read how King *David* firſt *ended his Burnt-Offerings and his Peace-Offerings*; and then he *bleſſed the People in the Name of the Lord, and dealt*

Summo mane offerebatur ſacrificium jugi, poſtea ad Prandium ſe conferebant. Orth. Lex c. p. 196.

1 Ch. 16 3

to every one, both Man and Woman, a Loaf of Bread, &c.
C. 10. v. 10. And in the Book of *Numbers* we read, That *on the Days of their Gladneſs*, and on their *Solemn Days, the Sons of* Aaron, *the Prieſts, were ordered to blow the Silver Trumpet of the Sanctuary over the Burnt-Offerings*; That is, it was the Prieſts buſineſs to call together the People to Communicate in the Service of God before they enter'd upon the *Feſtival* part of the day.

And as the Ancient *Jews* did perform this preliminary Devotion after their Ceremonial faſhion, ſo certainly it is a moſt Decent and moſt Reaſonable Cuſtom amongſt us Chriſtians too, at ſuch like Solemnities as theſe, to ſanctifie the Work of the whole day with a Pious and Religious beginning; Under the Oeconomy of the *Goſpel* it has pleas'd Almighty God to diſpence with the ſervile Duties of the Law, and not to exact of us the troubleſome Oblations of *Sacrifices*; We ought therefore to be the more punctual in the performance of our *Spiritual* Offices to Him, we ought to offer up our ſelves, our Souls, our Bodies as *Living ſacrifices*, which the Apoſtle
Rom. 12. 1. tells us are *Holy, Acceptable unto God*, and no more but what is our *Reaſonable Service*.

Before the undertaking of any Lawful Buſineſs, it is very proper to invoke Gods Favour, and Protection, and Aſſiſtance, that all our Works may be *begun, continued, and ended in him*; But eſpecially at ſuch a time as this, the very Nature of our Meeting requires it; When People come together with good and Charitable Intentions, what can be more Decent, what can be more effectual, than to pray to God that He would be pleas'd to be in the *midſt of them*? and to inſpire their Hearts with a right ſenſe of that Grace? and to direct their Conſultations, and to ſanctifie their good Purpoſes, and to accept of their ſmall Oblations, and to proſper them to the good and

and profitable Ends they are intended for? And having begun the day thus auſpiciouſly with our Service to our God, we may then more chearfully deſcend to our ſelves; and from the Spiritual Entertainment of our *Souls* here, we may paſs without offence to the moderate Refreſhment of our *Bodies* after. Which brings me to the

Second Thing I was to ſpeak to from the Conſideration of the former part of the Text, which was to Vindicate ſuch-like Feſtival Meetings as this from the Reflections and Aſperſions of ſome Perſons in the World who may blame *Them*, as tending rather to Looſeneſs and Extravagancy, than to Mutual Good and Godlineſs. Indeed, it is confeſs'd, the beſt Deſigns are liable to Corruption, and oftentimes good Intentions are perverted to ill Ends and uſes; The Limits and Boundaries of Virtue and Vice touch upon one another; and Humane Nature, nakedly conſidered without the Laws and Rules of Morality and Religion, being ſubject to Excurſions, without a juſt Government and Circumſpection, may ſtagger out of the narrow Paths of Righteouſneſs into Sin and Error; And this it was that made St. *Paul* blame the *Corinthians* for the miſuſe they made of their *Feaſts of Love*; The Holy Apoſtle could not endure to hear of that Irregular and Diſorderly Behaviour they were guilty of at thoſe Sacred Feaſts which were appointed only for the propagation and improvement of Chriſtian Love and Unity; Therefore he ſeverely checks and reprimands them for their Miſcarriages, and tells them, they *met for the worſe, and not for the better*; It was a moſt groſs, abominable, and Beaſtly Sin he charged this People with, a Sin no leſs than that of Drunkenneſs; a Sin which God forbid ſhould ever be admitted amongſt theſe Chriſtian Feaſts of *Ours*; a Sin, which, to uſe the Apoſtles Words, *let it not be ſo much as once named amongſt you, as becometh Saints*; And for 1 Cor. 11. 17.

this reaſon it was he expoſtulates the caſe with them, *Have ye not Houſes to eat and to drink in?* but muſt you appear thus beſtial in publick? Muſt you turn theſe Meetings, which were intended for the encouragement of Virtue and Charity, into rude *Bacchanals* and *Revels? What ſhall I ſay unto you? Shall I praiſe you in this? I praiſe you not?*

After this manner St. *Paul* very deſervedly reproves the *Corinthians*; But in Anſwer to this Inſtance may be ſaid, That the Abuſe and Depravation of ſome one or more particular Good Deſigns, is no juſt Argument againſt the Practice of all ſuch in general; From Singulars to Univerſals is no right way of arguing; A Man may as reaſonably urge, That, becauſe there are ſome bad Men in the World, therefore all Mankind is to be extirpated and ſwept off the face of the Earth. Man, if he does not miſuſe thoſe Creatures which God has afforded for his Benefit, and for the Entercourſe of Love and Friendſhip, as well as the Support and Repairs of his Body, may very innocently indulge himſelf in the moderate participation of them; Man may now *Eat* and *Live*; and Eating and Drinking are become not only the Symbols of Chriſts Love to us, as in the *Holy Euchariſt*; but they are, and always were the Symbols of Love and Kindneſs between Man and Man; Accordingly we read the *Romans* had their Annual *Chariſtia*, or *Feaſts of Friendſhip*, much reſembling theſe *County-Feaſts* of ours, at which Friends and Relations were uſed to meet, in order to preſerveUnion and a good Underſtanding between themſelves. But I will not inſtance in any *Heatheniſh* Cuſtomes, *that* being an Objection which ſome make againſt theſe *Publick Feaſts*, that they are derived down to us from the Looſe Practiſes of the *Ancient Pagans*; I will endeavour rather to vindicate the Practice of them.

Firſt,

Firſt, From the Authority of the Holy Scriptures, and then,

Secondly, From the reaſonableneſs of the thing it ſelf.

Firſt, From the Authority of the Holy Scriptures; And if we ſearch the remoteſt Antiquities of the *Bible*, and go as far back as that Hiſtory will permit us, we ſhall find that Eating and Drinking were always lookt upon as Tokens of Friendſhip and Civility; Thus we read, *Gen.* 18.5. when Three Angels viſited *Abraham*; The Firſt thing that he did, after his humble Salutation of them, was to make an Entertainment for them, and to invite them to *Eat* with him; which courteous offer they were ſo far from being offended at, that they conſented He ſhould *do as he had ſaid*. And the ſame we read of *Lot* in the very next Chapter: ſo likewiſe of *Joſeph* in the 43. *Chapter*, How he Entertain'd his Brethren when he ſaw them in *Ægypt*, for he did not only make them *Eat*, but we read, *They drank and were merry with him.*

Then to come down lower to the Times under the Law, my Text is a ſufficient proof that Feaſtings were cuſtomary amongſt Men then; and as theſe Three were Ordain'd and Directed by the Letter of the *Law* it ſelf, ſo the principal Benefit intended by them was, after a temperate Refreſhment and Relaxation, to communicate to the neceſſities of the *Poor*, becauſe it is ſtill ſaid, *None ſhall appear before the Lord empty*: And as upon ſome other particular occaſions we may read of other Feaſts beſides theſe amongſt the *Jews*, as that of the Feaſt of *Purim*, *Eſther* 9. ſo there you may find that the main Deſign amongſt all their Joy and Gladneſs, was to preſerve a mutual Love and Friendſhip, and to advance *Charity* amongſt themſelves, as we read it there enjoyn'd that they ſhould ſend *portions of Meat to one another, and Gifts to the Poor.* Gen. 43. 34. v. 22.

I ſhall

I ſhall trouble you with no more Inſtances from under the Law, let us ſee what Countenance the *Goſpel* gives ſuch Cuſtoms as theſe. To begin therefore with the *Author and Finiſher of our Faith Chriſt Jeſus*, we have reaſon to believe that He did not diſapprove of, or condemn theſe Cuſtoms, becauſe he condeſcended ſometimes to participate of them, as we read He did of the *Feaſt* of the *Paſſover*, and of the *Feaſt* of the *Tabernacles*; and at the *Marriage-Feaſt* of *Cana* in *Galilee*; at which He and his Bleſſed Mother were. He manifeſtly ſignaliz'd both his Power and likewiſe his Approbation of ſuch like innocent Meetings, by working there his Firſt Miracle of turning *Water into Wine*, as if he intended not only to ſupply their preſent neceſſities at that time, but to prevent and remove ſuch unneceſſary ſcruples as ſome Men might upon ſome ſuch occaſions afterwards raiſe; And, if not in, preſently after our *Saviour*'s Time we read of the *Feaſts of Charity* amongſt the *Chriſtians*; and tho' we do not ſo frequently amongſt the Ancient Fathers find mention of theſe *Feaſts*, becauſe of the many and violent Perſecutions of God's Church in thoſe Elder times, and the few opportunities they had of enjoying one another's Converſation, yet we want not ſufficient Teſtimonies even of thoſe days to juſtifie the Matter to us. For we read of *Feaſts* inſtituted by the *Canons* of *St. Clement*, one of the Firſt Biſhops of *Rome*, whilſt that Church was in its Purity and uncorrupt; and at the Commemoration of *Saints* and *Martyrs*, *Theodoret* tells us, the Primitive Chriſtians did uſually indulge themſelves more than at other times. And another Father ſeems to argue with ſome Concern, That Men ſhould Annually celebrate and rejoyce in ſuch and ſuch Days, and then he names the Days, either on their *Birth-days*, or their *Marriage-days*, or ſome *Set days in Memory, and to the Honour of the Place and Country where they and their Anceſtors did firſt dwell*, which agrees with the Inſtitution of theſe our *County Feaſts*.

Mat. 26. 21. Luke 7 10. Jo 2. 11. Jud. 2. 12. Suaroz. de Relig. Greg Nazianz.

But

But *Secondly*, To argue from the reaſonableneſs of the Thing it ſelf; How can any Man, tho' of the moſt rigid and auſtere Life whatever, juſtly cry down theſe *Publick Meetings*? Man is naturally a ſociable Creature, and by the very frame and temper of his Mind, is inclined to converſation with his Fellow Creatures; and if all Mankind were ſuppoſed to be turned looſe, and every Man to ſtand upon his own ſingle bottom, each Man would be ſo far from being in a *ſtate of War*, and bidding defiance to all the reſt, as ſome modern Philoſophers aſſert, that they would rather *All* naturally fall into *Societies*, and combine together for a common Good. God Almighty has beſtow'd upon *Man*, above all other earthly Creatures, the Gift of *Speech*; that by this Faculty we might more eaſily communicate our Thoughts to one another, and conſult together for our mutual Benefit and Comfort; but if every ſingle Man were Self-ſufficient, and could by his own Strength and Abilities live happily in this World, without the help of any other, What need then would there be of *Speech*? But it has pleaſed GOD to make us after another Frame and Model, and he has ſo order'd the Affairs of Men, that they have a reciprocal Dependence upon one another; There is no Man of the greateſt affluence, of the greateſt perfections, but that ſome time or other he may ſtand in need of his Neighbours aſſiſtance, and therefore Mankind naturally falls into *Communities* and *Societies*, and lays mutual Obligations upon one another, by the alternate Returns of which the whole Body ſubſiſts happily, and lives comfortably in this World; And this indeed has been the means, by which, not only *Private Families* and *Fraternities* have throve and flouriſhed in the World; but greater *Corporations* likewiſe, *Cities* and *Kingdoms* do owe their growth to the *mutual Good* they do for, and the *mutual Friendſhip* they maintain one among another;

other; To go no farther, to what a height of Magnificence and grandeur is this *Glorious City* we are now in grown? And to what does it owe all this, but to its *Unanimous* Government and Agreement within it ſelf, and to its generous *Commerce* and *Correſpondence* with all the World abroad? In a word, there is nothing can contribute more to the Growth and Greatneſs of a People, than *Piety* to their God, *Virtue* among themſelves, and *Love* to their Friends and Neighbours; And what more effectual way can there be deviſed to nouriſh and propagate theſe good Graces among a People, than for ſeveral *Societies* of Men to meet at *appointed Seaſons*, to ſerve God, and to conſult together for their common Good, and to do other Offices of Humanity? Whatever Good the *Parts* of a Body do, or enjoy themſelves, conduces to the advantage of the *Whole*; and if ſeveral diſtinct *Sccieties* of Men are Pious and Charitable, Peaceable and Quiet, Loving and Friendly among themſelves; The *Common-wealth* in General muſt needs be the better for it. And for this end it is we meet here this day, and that theſe yearly Solemnities are kept up and practiſed among us, to call Friends and Neighbours together, to renew and confirm their Acquaintance, and to unite their Intereſts, and to warm their Affections, and to ſtir up a Godly and Laudable Emulation in all their Breaſts of out-doing of one another in Acts of Goodneſs, at leaſt of following of good Examples; And it cannot ſure but be a great ſatisfaction to all good Men, to ſee ſo Generous, ſo Humane, ſo Chriſtian a diſpoſition as this, to prevail and reign ſo much amongſt us.

I have often obſerved in *Popiſh Countries abroad*, the common People do much more Religiouſly obſerve a *Saints-Day* that comes but once a year, than the *Lords Day* that comes once a week; Now I would not be thought to mention

tion this to their Praiſe and Commendation, for I rather think it an Error and Corruption in them, only this Obſervation may be made from it, That Mens Minds are generally more affected with uncommon, and unfrequent Occurrences, than they are with the daily and uſual Paſſages of their Lives; What I would infer, is this, That tho' we all have very frequent opportunities of going to the Church of God, and there hearing his Holy Word, and offering our Prayers and Praiſes unto him; and tho' we may daily or very often meet with ſeveral of our Friends and Acquaintance, and do mutual Services for one another; and tho' we may hourly and every where ſee proper Objects of our Compaſſion and Charity; yet 'tis to be believed that all, or moſt of us do *This day* come hither with Thoughts more prepared and elevated to Serve God, and with Affections more inſpired, with Kindneſs and Friendſhip to our *Country-men*, and with Reſolutions to go to a higher Degree of Beneficence and Charity, than we always are poſſeſt with at other ordinary times; And therefore ſuch *Periodical* days as theſe are very uſeful, and much to be encouraged, if for no other Reaſons, yet for this one alone, that if any ſuch ill Men can be ſuppoſed to be in the World, who in the ſpace of a whole year do never go to Church, nor in that time do any manner of good, either to their Neighbours or the Poor, yet upon *this day* they can ſcarce avoid it; upon *this Day* they muſt for very ſhame appear with their *Countrymen* before the *Lord*, and upon *this day* my *Text* tells them, They muſt not *appear empty*. And this brings me to the *Second* part of the Text. *And they ſhall not appear before the Lord empty, every Man ſhall give as he is able.*

From hence I propos'd *Two* Things,

Firſt, To ſhew that *Charity* and *Friendſhip* was the ultimate End, and Benefit aimed at by all Feſtival Aſſemblies.

Secondly, To ſet forth the Worth and Excellency of *thoſe Graces*, and to recommend them to our Chriſtian Practice. And *Firſt*, To ſhew that *Charity*, and the Relief of the Poor was the principal intent of *Publick Feaſts* among the *Jews*, we need go no farther than the words of my Text, where it is enjoyn'd as a Duty inſeparable from them, and without which, all their Feaſts ſeem to be lame and imperfect. And the *Old Jews*, as the punctualneſs of their Religion was ſeen chiefly in the obſervance of the outward Acts of it, ſo were they very exact in that external part of Charity, which is *Alms-giving*, inſomuch that they eſteem'd the neglect of it downright *Idolatry*; for the ſame reaſon undoubtedly that *St. Paul* calls *Covetouſneſs* ſo. But they, like a certain Modern Church, look'd only upon the *Opus operatum*, *The bare matter of Fact*, and thought the Deed meritorious, whether the intention of the Mind went with the Action, or not. Accordingly ſome of the *Rabbies* call this exerciſe of *Alms-giving* a perfect *Juſtification*; *If a Man gives a Farthing to the Poor, he ſhall be made partaker of the Beatifick Viſion*, ſays one of them. But to do the People of *Iſrael* in general right, a great many good and devout Men, without doubt, there were among them, who in the diſpenſation of their *Alms*, let their Hearts and their Hands go together; And as they had ſeveral ways of making Proviſion for the Poor, as by Doles of Meat, by publick Gatherings on Sabbath-Days in their Synagogues, and by Allotments of part of their Corn, and Vintage, ſo particularly at their *Feaſts* they never omitted their Contributions *there*. And for *one* way that they diſpoſed of part of theſe Charitable Contributions, I muſt more eſpecially commend *Them*, together with *You*, the Members of this *Society*, and that was, for the Diſburſements they made for the Educating of *Good Mens poor Children*, *Ut nutrirentur pueri pauperes virorum bonorum*, ſays my

☞ 2. 11.

Buxtorff. Synag.

my Author; For this certainly is one of the moſt beneficial Acts of Charity that can be; To take a Youth that is Poor, and deſtitute of all advantages of Education, and to bring him up in the Knowledge and Fear of God, and to put him into a way wherein by his diligence and induſtry, he may arrive to an honeſt Livelyhood in the World: *This* indeed is a moſt Generous and Noble Action. And this directs me,

Secondly, To ſet forth the Worth and Excellency of the Virtue of *Charity*.

Charity taken in the largeſt and moſt comprehenſive Senſe, includes the whole Circle and Compaſs of our Religion; it contains all the Offices and Duties of Chriſtianity, whether they reſpect *God*, our *Neighbour*, or *Our Selves*; every Action that can be call'd Good, is reducible under this Head; Every Virtue has a Relation to, and derives its *Being* from this great *Mother* of them All; call'd *Charity*.

But I ſhall not now diſcourſe of *Charity*, under that wide and boundleſs Notion of it; I ſhall confine my ſelf within narrower limits, and ſpeak only to thoſe parts of it which ſeem to be moſt ſuitable and proper, becauſe they are the grounds and occaſion of our preſent Meeting; And thoſe are,

Firſt, The *Relief* of the *Poor*, And

Secondly, The preſervation of *Love* and *Unity* among our Selves.

Firſt, As to that part of *Charity* which regards the *Poor*, it is a moſt worthy and commendable Virtue; For it is, Firſt, highly acceptable to God. Secondly, It is profitable to Man. And Thirdly, It is Comfortable to our Selves.

Firſt, It muſt be acceptable to God, becauſe it is a fulfilling of his Law, a maintaining of his neceſſitous Creatures, a ſort of repairing and making good the ſeeming de-

ficiencies of Providence, a lending unto God, and a relying upon his Credit for a retribution of it.

Secondly, It is profitable to Man in retrieving him from Want, in reſtoring him to Health, in preventing him from Sin and the like.

And *Thirdly*, What can be more comfortable to our Selves, than to reflect upon, and to view our own Perſons, as the Inſtruments and Authors of ſuch great Acts of Goodneſs as *Theſe* are? It muſt needs pleaſe a Man to ſee himſelf in a condition to Buoy up and ſave his Fellow-Creature from ſinking, to redeem his Brother, and to prop up Humane Nature that was languiſhing and decaying under the ſeverities of Fortune. It muſt raiſe a wonderful delight in a Man's Mind, and fill his Heart with a Triumphant Thankſgiving to God, that he has ſo Bleſſed *him* particularly, that he can be able to ſupply what God was pleas'd to deny to others. In a word, There is no Virtue whatever creates ſo great a pleaſure in the Practice, and leaves ſo delightful, and ſo laſting a Remembrance after it, as *Charity* does.

And as the Excellency of *Charity* may be ſeen both in the *Pleaſure* and the *Profit* of it, ſo is it made ſtill more excellent by the *Chriſtian Doctrine* in its *Extent* and *Diffuſiveneſs*. The *Jews*, 'tis true, were Charitable, but the Confines of the Virtue went no farther with them than the bounds of *Judea*; Ours encompaſſes the whole Globe, and ſpreads over the Face of the Earth, and ſhoots its warm Beams as far and wide as the Sun does *His*. No Nation, Party or Religion excludes Men from our *Charity*, if their Wants make them Objects of it; A *Jew* would not ſo much as put a Man into the right way upon the Road, or relieve a Hungry or a Thirſty Traveller, unleſs he were one of their own Religion; We are Taught to Pray for Turks,

Turks, Hereticks, and Infidels; nay, our Religion teaches us, not only to do good to thoſe we love, and are beloved by, but to thoſe that *Curſe, Hate, and Deſpitefully uſe us*, that we may herein imitate *our Father which is in Heaven, who maketh the Sun to riſe upon the Evil and Good, and ſendeth Rain on the Juſt and Unjuſt.* Mat. 5. 45.

But however, although our *Chriſtian Charity* is ſo very wide and extenſive as to comprehend all Mankind; yet there is ſomething in Humane Nature that prompts and directs us to wiſh well, and to do well too, to thoſe of ſome nearer Relation to us; 'Tis true, St. *Paul* preſcribes to us to *do good unto all Men*, we may and ought to have an univerſal Good Will and Diſpoſition of Mind to every Creature that has the ſtamp of Humanity upon it; and ſhould, as they fall in our way, be ready to ſtretch out our helping hand to all that call upon us for our Aid and Aſſiſtance; But then, as the Apoſtle ſubjoins, we ought to regard more eſpecially the *Houſhold of Faith*; Chriſtians ought to be preferr'd before all others; and of them it is impoſſible any one Man can extend his Charity to all; Want of Opportunity ſometimes, but want of Ability more frequently hinders that; Though in ſuch Caſes as theſe, God, we are taught, is pleas'd to accept of the Will for the Deed; The pooreſt Man living in the merciful Eſtimation of God, may be as Charitable as the Richeſt, for his Heart may be inclined to give what his Hand cannot furniſh him with; This we may learn from our Saviour's telling us, that the gift of *a Cup of cold Water* in ſome Circumſtances, will be accepted as the higheſt Piece of Charity; But we are ſpeaking now of thoſe whom we will ſuppoſe to have both Opportunities and Abilities, yet it is ſtill impoſſible they can do good to all Men; Therefore it becomes neceſſary, that we ſet ſome Rules to our ſelves for the more Diſcreet ordering of

our

our Charity; And, beſides the accidental Occaſions that oftner call upon us than the richeſt amongſt us can anſwer, Nature certainly and good Reaſon will direct us to do the beſt we can for our own Friends and Relations, for thoſe of our own Nation, and our own Countrey; There either are ſome ſecret Springs and Motions in Human Nature, that guide the Affections that way, or elſe there is ſome hidden attractive Virtue in every ones Native Countrey, that turns and draws the Mind to it; This Natural Tendency and Inclination of the Soul, quickned and heightned by the Chriſtian Grace of Charity, is That, Brethren, that does affect your Breaſts; This it is that poſſeſſes, influences, and enlarges your Hearts; This it is that invigorates and gives life to this Society; This it is that has produced many living Inſtances of your Goodneſs, and may, I hope, beget more.

The Subject of *Charity* which I am now upon is very large and copious, and appears as a wide Ocean before me, into which if I ſhould lanch farther out, as the Virtue it ſelf knows no bounds, ſo I fear my Diſcourſe would exceed its juſt limits: I ſhall therefore ſay no more upon this Head, hoping what I have already ſpoke of its Worth and Excellency, may ſuffice for Arguments and Obligations to induce you to the Practice of it.

Secondly, I paſs now to the *Second* Part of this Head, and indeed to the Second good End, propos'd by your ſelves, of your Aſſembling together on this Day, which is for the Preſervation of Mutual Love and Unity among your ſelves. *How good and joyful a thing is it* (ſays Holy *David*) *for Brethren to dwell together in Unity? It is like the pretious Ointment upon the Head, that ran down unto the Beard, even unto* Aaron's *Beard, and went down to the*

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the Skirts of his Cloathing. Love and Unity is every way like Oyl, 'tis ſoft and ſmooth, and of a dilating faculty; it ſpreads it ſelf from the very Head of a *Society*, over all the particular Members of it, and reaches down, and communicates its Goodneſs even unto the loweſt and the meaneſt Parts of it, even unto the *Skirts of the Cloathing*. And this Virtue above all others ought to be cheriſh'd and kept up amongſt you, becauſe it is the chief Cement, the very Life and Soul of all Communities. Without this Concord and Tuneableneſs of Affections, Mens Humours will jarr and grate upon one another; nothing will pleaſe another what his Partner does, but little Piques and frivolous Exceptions will always be a making, which by degrees will be fermented into higher Animoſities, till it at laſt breaks out into open Feuds and Quarrels, and ſo break to pieces and utterly diſſolve the beſt *Societies* whatever. And this Healing, this Balſamick, this Cordial Vertue of Love and Unity, may, I think, be beſt preſerv'd amongſt you, by conſidering your ſelves under this three-fold Relation to one another.

Firſt, As you are Members of the ſame Church.
Secondly, As you are Subjects of the ſame Government.
Thirdly, As you are Natives of the ſame County.

Firſt, As you are Members of the ſame Church; And indeed Love and Unity, as it was the Sum and Subſtance, and the whole Completion of the Doctrine of Chriſt; ſo was it always the Diſtinguiſhing Characteriſtick and Badge of his true Diſciples; And for this the Primitive Chriſtians were ſingularly taken notice of by the Heathens, as ſome of the ancient Fathers inform us; Nay *Julian*, that Apoſtate Emperour, though he was the greateſt *Tertullian.*

greateſt Perſecutor of them, yet he could not but upbraid his own Heathens with the Love and Unanimity he obſerv'd to be kept up among the *Galileans* (as he by way of reproach calls the *Chriſtians.*) How deplorable a thing is it then, when our Lord and Maſter ſays, *By this ſhall all Men know that ye are my Diſciples if ye love one another*, to ſee ſo many Sects and Diviſions, as now are, in the Church of Chriſt? How ſhamefully is this great Precept of His, this *New Commandment*, that our Saviour came into the World on purpoſe to bring among us, and of which He was the moſt Heroical Example himſelf that ever liv'd; How unworthily, I ſay, is it neglected and ſlighted by us? Some Men, who call themſelves Chriſtians, are ſo far from loving one another, that they can Hate and Perſecute, Baniſh and Enſlave, Torture and Rack to Death their Brethren in God, and their Fellow-Chriſtians, for ſome Differences in Opinion from them. But, not to reflect upon thoſe without, How many Scruples and Niceties, how many Separations and Diviſions are there even among *Us*, who all profeſs our ſelves of one Reformed Religion? Though we agree in the Subſtantial and Fundamental Parts of Religion, and in all the neceſſary Articles of Faith, yet we are broke and crumbled into Parties about the Rites and Ceremonies of Worſhip; But how great a Pity, to ſay no worſe, is this, that for Matters of Decency and Comelineſs, and which are allowed in themſelves indifferent, Men ſhould thence take Occaſion to break the Unity of the Church, and the Band of Peace? But I proceed to the next Point, without the leaſt ſurmize of any ſuch difference of Opinion among you here, who ſo unanimouſly join in the Publick Worſhip of the Church.

Secondly,

Secondly, The *Second* thing that ſhould oblige you to *Love* and *Unity* is the Conſideration of your being *Fellow-Subjects* under the ſame Government. Next to the Laws of God, the Laws of the Land are to be obſerved; And unity of Opinion in the *State*, is as much required as it is in the *Church*: Indeed no Man can be a true Chriſtian unleſs he is a good Subject. By the Holy Sacrament of Baptiſm we are all initiated into one Faith, made Children of the ſame Mother, Heirs of the ſame Bleſſed Hopes of Eternal Salvation; and by the like Sacred Obligations are we all incorporated into the ſame Government; The Word *Sacramentum* among the *Latins* properly ſignifies an *Oath* of *Fealty* or Truſt; ſo that as by the Sacrament of Baptiſm we oblige our ſelves to ſerve God, and to renounce the *Devil and all his Works*, ſo by a Sacrament of Fidelity, by an *Oath*, we all ſtand engaged to ſerve our *Lawful* and *Rightful King*, and to oppoſe all his Enemies and Adverſaries whatever. The union of the Hearts of the People is that which maintains a Government; and Differences and Diſtractions among them is that which deſtroys it. There is a remarkable Hiſtory among the *Italian* Writers of the *Guelphs* and *Gibellines*, two Diſſenting Gangs or Clans of the People; This Quarrel firſt ſprung from ſmall Seeds, but it grew up to the univerſal Confuſion of the People; The Occaſion was the Difference of Two Brothers, one contending for the Pope, the other for the Emperour, but this ſwell'd and gathered to ſuch an height, that it broke the whole People into Parties, and created ſuch an hatred and inveteracy among them, that it ended almoſt in a general ſlaughter of them both. I ſhall make no Reflexions upon the Story, only this I may ſay, becauſe our Saviour Chriſt ſaid it, *Every King-*

dom divided againſt it ſelf is brought to deſolation, and every City or Houſe divided againſt it ſelf, cannot ſtand. Let me therefore entreat you, Brethren, above all things to take care that Fidelity and Loyalty may be preſerved amongſt you; may never any Principles of Faction or Turbulency creep into this *Society*. No Nation has more or better Laws for the Welfare and Defence of the Subject than we have, and no Nation has a Wiſer or more Reſolute Prince to maintain them, and ſee them put in Execution; No Hardſhips are too hard to undergo, no Hazards too dangerous to attempt, no Enemy too formidable to attack, nothing too much for him to do for the good of his People. How much then are we bound, if not in Conſcience, yet in Gratitude, to join all our Hearts and Hands in an unanimous Obedience to this *Great Man*? Let no one therefore harbour any ſecret Reſerves in his Heart for any *Former*, or hanker after any *New* ſort of Government; But, as St. *Peter* adviſes, *Be ye all of one mind, having compaſſion one of another; Honour all Men, love the Brotherhood, Fear God, Honour the King.*

Thirdly, You lie under another Obligation of loving one another, as you are Natives of the ſame County. As long as Men are Men, and there is any Relation between Man and Man, or between Men and Places, there will certainly be Affections in them ſuitable to thoſe Relations; from hence it is that Parent and Child have a natural Proneneſs to each other, and that all Mankind has a Reſpect and Affection for the Place of his Birth or Education. Profane Hiſtory is full of Examples of Men who have ſhewn the great value they have had for their own Countrey, I ſhall trouble you with none; but will look rather into Sacred Hiſtory, and there we find

find King *David* in his higheſt Raptures when he ſpeaks of his own Country, *Jeruſalem is built as a City that is at unity in it ſelf. O pray for the peace of Jeruſalem, they ſhall proſper that love Thee, Peace be within thy Walls, and Plenteouſneſs within thy Palaces, for my Brethren and Companions ſake I will wiſh Thee Proſperity.* And *Moſes* we read went higher, for when He was deprecating God's Anger which he had conceiv'd againſt the People of *Iſrael*, He pray'd unto God and ſaid, *Oh this people have ſinned a great ſin, yet now if thou wilt, Forgive their Sin, if not, blot me I pray Thee out of the Book which thou haſt written*; As if Salvation it ſelf could not pleaſe him, unleſs his Country-men were ſaved with him. And juſt like him St. *Paul* ſpeaks, *I could wiſh that my ſelf were accurſed from Chriſt, for my Brethren and my Kinſmen according to the Fleſh.* Nay, our Saviour himſelf with whom there is no diſtinction of Perſons, and who came to ſave all Mankind, could not forbear expreſſing ſome particular tenderneſs for his own Countrymen, *The loſt ſheep of Iſrael.*

☞ *Laſtly*, Therefore, Brethren, Let this conſideration of your Birth, together with the other *Two*, compleat and perfect the Bleſſed Grace of Unity and Peace, and Love amongſt you; nor let the Malignities, or Scoffings of any diſcountenance or diſcourage theſe Meetings of yours, but rather *Let your Light ſo ſhine before Men, that they may ſee your Good Works.* I have ſhewn you that ſuch like *Feaſts* as theſe are juſtifiable from the Authority of all Nations, Religions and Ages, and that the Advancement of Charity and mutual Love amongſt Men was the benefit propoſed continually by them; I have ſhewn you likewiſe how good and uſeful Virtues, Charity to the Poor, and Unity amongſt Men are; and I have ſhewn what Obligations you lie under to further and promote theſe Virtues, both

as you are Good Chriſtians and Good Subjects; There is one other, not is it the meaneſt Conſideration that ſhould weigh with you, and ſtir you up to Virtue and Goodneſs, and that is the Honour of your County; Indeed whatever Nation, or part of a Nation, or City a Man has been born in, he ought to have in ſome degree, the ſame regard and awfulneſs for it, as for his natural Parents; and as no honeſt Man would willingly ſo behave himſelf in the World, as to bring either a ſcandal or grief to his Parents, ſo ought every Man to be careful not to do ſo to the place of his Birth. The place of a Man's Birth, whether it be Honourable, or whether it be Diſhonourable, the Man himſelf ought to aſpire to ſome degree of Reputation and Glory; that ſo, if the place be already Honourable, he may not degenerate from it; if it be not, he may gain an Honour to it. And if there be any Obligation to Virtue and Goodneſs laid upon Men from the Honour of their Country, you, the Natives of *Cheſhire* have, I am ſure, as great as any; for that is a Country which, in regard to that wherein I am, I will not ſay is the beſt, yet this I may without partiality ſay, that take it in what reſpect you pleaſe, it need not for the bigneſs of it, ſubmit to any *County* in *England*.

I muſt confeſs I do not approve of high Panegyricks upon any thing; But when the praiſe of Good Men, or Good Countries, or any good thing, ſerves to Good ends, as to the exciting of a virtuous Emulation in Men, of attaining to the Worth and Honour of their Anceſtors, of living up to the character of their Countrymen, and of doing nothing that their Friends or Relations ſhall be aſhamed of them for; when I ſay Encomiums and Praiſes are intended for, and do produce ſuch Effects as theſe, then are they praiſes, much to be praiſed themſelves.

But

But indeed the place I am now ſpeaking of requires not *My* labour, it needs no Encomiums from my Hand; The naked truth of any truly-worthy thing is its beſt commendation; Hear therefore what Hiſtorians ſay of it, and *firſt* of the *Place* it ſelf; *Ceſtria tali ſolique ratione*, &c. *Cheſhire for the goodneſs of its ſituation and Land, may be compared with the beſt in* England; *the Air is excellent and wholeſome, the Ground fat, fruitful, and pleaſant; The Commodities of the Countrey conſiſt in Corn, Cattle, Salt, and Iron-works.* Then *Secondly*, as to the People, another Author ſays, *The Men of* Cheſhire *yield to none in Worth and Goodneſs, it is a County full of Nobility, and gallant Warlike Perſons. No part of* England *formerly ſupply'd the King's Army with more Nobility, or could number more Knights Families*, ſays *Cambden*. Then as to Antientneſs of the County, we all know it is the eldeſt Palatinate in *England*, and many years before it was made ſo, it was a *Roman Colony*; for there we read was planted the *Twentieth Legion*, which was the moſt ſucceſsful and moſt victorious Legion the Old *Romans* had, and from them, no doubt, a great many now living are deſcended; It would be endleſs to rehearſe unto you what Hiſtorians Record to the Honour of this County; All I ſhall ſay, is, that for fertility of Soil, for pleaſantneſs of Situation, for commodiouſneſs of Rivers, for opulency of Product, and for populouſneſs of Inhabitants, it may vye with any County in *England*.

Si. Tho. Smith.

Jo. Barclai.

What remains now, but that we, with Holy *David*, Bleſs and Praiſe Almighty God for making this pleaſant Land the *Lot of our Inheritance*; a Land furniſh'd with all the Conveniencies and Delights of Living; a Land like that of *Canaan* it ſelf, a Land *Flowing with Milk and Honey*. *Antiqui colant Antiquum deum* is the *Motto* of our County Arms, that is, *Let an Antient People worſhip the Antient*

Antient of Days; A moſt Noble and truly Chriſtian ſaying, and what may perpetually admoniſh us of our Duty towards God; we of this County do value, and juſtly value our Selves upon our Antiquity, but let us not too vainly pride our Selves in that, or any other Earthly Honours, but rather let us worſhip, let us revere, let us humbly Adore him that is Antienter than all Antiquity, *The Antient of days.* In a word, ſince it has pleas'd God to have initiated us into ſo Holy a Religion, and to have placed us under ſo juſt a Government, and to have planted us in ſo good a Country, let us ſo live and demean our ſelves, as to bring Credit and Reputation to our Country, to the Government, and to our Religion. I will end all with that Noble Scale of Virtues of St. *Peters*, Let us *add to our Faith Virtue, to Virtue Knowledge, and to Knowledge Temperance, and to Temperance Patienſe, and to Patience Godlineſs, and to Godlineſs Brotherly Kindneſs, and to Brotherly Kindneſs Charity.* Let us do this, and we do all; Let us do this and we ſhall come up to the higheſt Perfection of Manhood; Let us do this and then we ſhall truly be, what our Countrymen of Old have been ſaid to be, *The Chief of Men.*

FINIS.

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